

Dr. Jack's Wife.

By ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE.

Author of "Dr. Jack," "Captain Tom," "Miss Caprice," etc., etc.

(Continued.)

"By mere accident. I knew there was a lady in state-room 23, for the minister's wife told me so. Chancing to be passing when the stewardess was opening the door, to carry in some toast and a cup of tea, my eyes fell upon a face I shall ever remember as the most beautiful as well as the most dangerous I have ever seen.

Marilla de los Vegas it was. I believe her presence on board this steamer is no accident, but part of a deep laid plan."

Doctor Jack is secretly worried himself, but for the sake of his wife he assumes to make light of the whole affair. Thus the afternoon passes and night comes. The steamer plows her way through phosphorescent seas, every drop seeming like molten silver as it falls upon the black surface.

Doctor Jack and his wife promenade the deck until a late hour, when Avis goes to her state-room feeling drowsy. Her husband wishes to smoke another cigar ere turning in, and seeking a retired spot indulges in deep thought.

A step behind causes him to turn his head.

"Jack!" says a voice.

"I'm here, Kirke," recognizing the dark figure.

"Thought I saw you come this way. I want a few minutes chat with you."

"Good! What better place than this could you find. Sit down, my dear fellow. Have a weed?"

"Thanks. I'm done smoking for tonight. Doctor, I have made a discovery."

Jack turns and eyes him in the peculiar light from the Southern Cross and such heavenly bodies as chance to beam upon them.

"Indeed! What is it like?"

"There are passengers on board not strangers to you, I reckon."

"So—you have seen her, too," remarks Jack, with a laugh, for he does not fear the beautiful Chilian half as much as does Avis.

"Her? I don't catch on quite."

"Don't you mean our handsome Chilian tigress—the woman who sees something in Jack Evans that strikes her fancy as to what manner of man she admires—in a word, Senorita Marilla?"

"You don't mean she's aboard?"

"Why not? This steamer is free to all who can pay for accommodations. Avis has seen her."

"Well, I can easily believe it since the rest of the gang are here."

"Now, it's my turn to ask your meaning."

"Easily answered. We have as fellow-passengers Lord Rackett Plympton—"

"Confusion!"

"And Colonel Leon Garcia, the fire-eater of the victorious Chilian Army."

Doctor Jack smokes in silence for a minute, but his thoughts are busy.

"This looks bad. I thought we'd give them all the slip; but, by Jove! our enemies go with us. It may make a difference in my plans."

"Dangerous crossing Panama with such a gang at your heels, ready to do anything in order to accomplish their end."

"Still I must reach New York in time. A vast interest demands my presence

The dizziness and faintness from which women suffer may be due to one of several causes. But the most common cause is disease of the delicate womanly organism. The story of Mrs. Brown, told in her letter below, gives a fair example of the conditions under which so many women work: "I had a sick headache nearly all the time, was so weak around my waist could hardly bear anything to touch me. I would work a little while and then lie down a while."

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there at a certain day. I shall, perhaps, have to keep on board the steamer until California is reached, and then cross the Continent by rail," musingly.

"Not a bad idea—much preferable to crossing at Panama. I believe at Aspinwall you would be murdered without fail."

"Ah! you know considerable about the canal. I believe you had some connection there."

"Yes, I'm something of a civil engineer, and worked a year on the ditch. Of all the hard places on earth, command me to the towns at either end of the isthmus. With such forces working against you, Doctor Jack, and the elements their gold can buy up on the isthmus, it would be suicide for you to try the passage."

"Tell me. When and how did you discover that these men were on board?"

"A short time ago—two figures passed me as I leaned over the rail—it was dark, and they probably failed to notice me. I thought a voice I heard sounded familiar, when I soon learned the truth."

"Could you tell what they talked about?"

"Not enough to decide, but it had some reference to you."

These things combined cause Doctor Jack to believe the fates have trouble in store for an individual about his size. He can grapple with difficulties as well as the next man, and does not lose that admirable self-possession that has long been his heritage.

Kirke, the Texan rover, who has led a wild life in many climes, is really more concerned over the matter than Jack.

"We must keep our eyes open, comrade. These rascally pirates mean us harm," he says.

"Come, Kirke, I never knew you to worry or flinch before."

"I'm thinking of your wife, Jack," quietly.

The doctor bites his lip.

"You may be sure she is on my mind, old friend. There are three of us. Surely we should be able to protect her; and we will, mark me," with the ring of steel in his low spoken words.

"Turn around. You can just get a glimpse of the two men up yonder, outlined against the heavens."

"I see them, and recognize milord's flowing side whiskers. At once Larry's envy and detestation," returns Jack, in a whisper.

The figures above vanish presently, but leave a peculiar influence behind, which Kirke in his odd fashion likens to the odor of sulphur. At any rate, their presence on board the steamer is suggestive of evil.

Jack grows quite uneasy, and soon tosses his cigar overboard as though it has lost its flavor.

"Good night, Kirke. See you later."

Truth to tell, he fears lest something might happen to Avis with these elements around.

Another day dawns and all is well. Doctor Jack looks in vain for the two men. They prefer to avoid him at present, though sooner or later he is bound to come upon them.

It is evident that the Englishman has abandoned his yacht at Valparaiso in order to follow the man he hates and the woman he adores. This alone stamps his motives as full of venom.

The worst may be expected from a man who could thus make sacrifices in order to accomplish his end.

So the day passes. A pleasant day, too, which is enjoyed by the travelers.

Again it is night.

Men who plot evil love darkness, and when the night has settled down it may be expected that those who hide from the light of day, and the eye of Jack Evans, will be on deck again, to talk and plan, perhaps to work.

Jack has talked it all over with his brave wife, and Avis knows the danger that menaces them. She is on her guard, and armed. Lord Rackett may find he has come in contact with fire should he seek to give her trouble.

The night threatens storm. Black clouds drift at intervals across the heavens, and the wind has arisen, so that the waves begin to roll.

There is something fascinating to Doctor Jack about the dark masses that rush hissing and seething along the side of the steamer. He has never grown weary of watching their passage, and leaning over the rail.

While thus engaged in meditation, he hears the sound of footsteps behind him. Of course it is Kirke, who left his side a little while before and promised to return when he had investigated certain things.

So he does not turn his head, and nothing warns him of the danger hovering near.

The first that Doctor Jack knows of his peril is when some weapon comes down upon his head with crushing force. At this very instant it seems to him he hears a woman's scream above the whistle of the wind through the rigging. Then rude hands seize him by the legs, he is given a toss, whirled through the air, and after one unsuccessful clutch at the rail, falls into the surging billows as they come foaming and hissing from along the vessel's side, eager to clutch their prey.

(To be Continued.)

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